

Dear Mom and Dad,

I'm getting started on this letter while the ice cream is brewing. We just finished our Saturday night dinner which consisted of spaghetti with a spicy scallop sauce. It turned out very well. I baked brownies and soon we will eat them with ice cream. For lunch we enjoyed another of the canned seafood which you sent us. We had some smoked sturgeon while listening to a radio production of "Don Quixote" put on by the Globe Repertory of Seattle, WA!

We enjoyed your letter with the articles enclosed. I'm certainly still happy with my job change and everything is going well. Last night Vickie came in to the office after work and we ate dinner at Anna's Italian Cafe in the Underground. Then we went into town and saw Shaw's "Man and Superman" at the Arena Stage. I first read that play in college and we have also seen it performed in London. In a popular line the Spanish bandit tells the hero, Jack Tanner, "I'm a brigand, I make my living by robbing the rich," and Jack replies, "I'm a gentleman, I make my living by robbing the poor."

Now I am back after eating my half of the brownies and ice cream. Vickie is still working on hers. Last Sunday we ran in the race at American University. Prior to the race I told Vickie she probably couldn't finish the entire 5-lap, 15.5 mile run and should sign up for the 2-lap, 6.2 mile race. She didn't answer, but did run and finish the long race. She was the 5th woman and said afterward, "it wasn't too bad." I thought it was bad; the difficulty category was IV, the highest, and is defined as, "forget your time, it's just a matter of survival."

Light snow began Thursday evening and continued through the night and left an inch or two on the ground yesterday morning. Not much is left although it has continued cold with the temperatures below freezing all day. It is supposed to warm up next week and we are anxious for our mild weather to return.

Thursday afternoon I went over to George Washington University to register for class. I wanted to take Artificial Intelligence, but the class was full due to pre-registration by students enrolled in classes this term. According to Patrick Winston, the AI guru at MIT, "Artificial Intelligence is the study of ideas that enable computers to be intelligent." There are two goals: "to make computers more useful," and, "to understand the principles that make intelligence possible." I did register for a class. It is digital communications theory which deals with (1) minimizing the number of bits which must be transmitted over the communication channel so as to provide a given printed audio, or visual record within a predetermined fidelity requirement (called source coding); and (2) ensuring that bits transmitted over the channel are received correctly despite the effects of interference of various types and origins (called channel coding). I went to a professor's office to get a

signature for my class and he warned me that he was teaching that section and it would be very difficult. There will be no final exam, but a term paper will require 15 hours per week. When I told him I was only taking classes for enjoyment and that I learned more when it is difficult, he said, "You're the type of student I like to have!" Now I have to try to live up to my words which I didn't really believe but said because of his challenging statements.

Vickie has already started her class. She is taking a preliminary COBOL (Common Business Oriented Language) at Northern Virginia Community College which is near CNA. Her classes meet on Wednesday evening and Saturday morning. A few classes will help her to understand the basis for the data base management system she uses at work and will qualify her for other jobs within and without the government. Unfortunately, the college computer does not yet have a dial-in system installed so Vickie cannot directly access that computer by means of our modem. But since my company is a subscriber to the ARPA Net, we can dial it up and have access to a wide range of computer languages and utilities. Thus Vickie can write a COBOL program on our computer and send it to the ARPA system for compilation and execution. I am doing the same thing now with LISP.

I have enclosed a couple of items for you and will try to write again soon although that term paper may severely limit my free time!

Love, Jim & Vickie

P.S. I just got Mom's letter about Ruth and Stella's trip to Europe. I'm a little confused because the only Nice I know about is on the French Riviera near Monaco. Perhaps there is a Nice in Italy but it must be a pretty small place! No doubt all the details will be worked out before the two depart. We would like to be living in Europe so we could show them around. One more thing, since I read the paper on the bus every day I am more interested in Congress and I would like to know what committees Mike is on.